

*TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE UNITED STATES*

*THE FRITS E. LAWAEZ
LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
FREDERIKSTED, ST. CROIX
VIRGIN ISLANDS*

** * **

*COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE
MAY 06, 2009
* PART 1 **

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*SENATOR WAYNE A.G. JAMES, Chairman
SENATOR LOUIS P. HILL, Vice-Chair
SENATOR TERRENCE "POSITIVE" NELSON
SENATOR NEREIDA RIVERA-O'REILLY
SENATOR NEVILLE A. JAMES*

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBER

SENATOR USIE R. RICHARDS

** * **

I N D E X

<i>1. Committee Meeting convened</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>2. Bill Number 28-0010</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>3. Mr. Gerard M. Emanuel</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>4. Mr. Ricky Brown</i>	<i>43</i>
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1 WHEREUPON, THE COMMITTEE MEETING COMMENCED AT
2 9:50 a.m.

3 SENATOR W. JAMES: Good morning. The Committee
4 on Education, Youth & Culture is hereby called to order.
5 Can I have a Roll Call, please?

6 MRS. H. ROWE: Senator Louis P. Hill.

7 SENATOR HILL: Present.

8 MRS. ROWE: Senator Neville James. Absent.

9 Senator Michael Thurland. Absent.

10 Senator Terrence "Positive" Nelson. Absent.

11 Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly. Excused.

12 Senator Craig Barshinger. Absent.

13 Senator Wayne A.G. James.

14 SENATOR W. JAMES: Present.

15 MRS. ROWE: Mr. Chair, two present, four absent,
16 one excused at Roll Call.

17 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you. In the absence of
18 a quorum, we will proceed with testimony.

19 Will the Clerk call the first item on the Agenda
20 to the floor, please?

21 MRS. ROWE: Mr. Chair, the first item on the
22 Agenda is: Bill Number 28-0010: An Act amending Title
23 1, Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 11, Section 171,
24 commemorating laborers on Contract Day or FireBurn or a
25 day to be revered and remembered in the Virgin Islands.

1 SENATOR W. JAMES: Let me bring to your
2 attention, the bill as presented in the committee read
3 Section 1171, which is a typographical error. That
4 error, however, has been noted to Legal Counsel and they
5 will make the adjustments in the record.

6 Sergeant-At-Arms, can you escort the testifiers
7 for Bill 28-0010 to the floor, please, to present this
8 morning?

9 Mr. Gerard Emanuel, Assistant Director of the
10 Division of Cultural Education; Mr. George Tyson, Virgin
11 Islands Historian and Mr. Ricky Brown, President of Our
12 Virgin Islands Labor Union; Mr. Robert Mathes, who was
13 supposed to be represented by Mr. Myron Jackson is not
14 here obviously, nor is Mr. Jackson.

15 Mr. Jackson tried t to catch a flight through the
16 airport when he missed his flight at the Seaplane, but
17 was unable to get a flight that would get here in a
18 timely manner.

19 George Tyson is somewhere in the vicinity. If he
20 can called to the floor, we can then begin.

21 While we are waiting for Mr. Tyson to arrive,
22 however, several correspondences that need to be read
23 into the official record. If the Clerk can read the
24 correspondence into the record, please?

25 MS. ROWE: Yes, Mr. Chair.

1 SENATOR W. JAMES: Audio Visual, can you please
2 assist Mr. Henneman Dorsey's mike, please?

3 MR. HENNEMAN-DORSEY: May 6, 2009

4 To: The Honorable Wayne James,
5 Chairman, Committee on Education, Culture &
6 Youth

7 28th Legislature of the Virgin Islands
8 Frederiksted, St. Croix VI

9 Dear Chairman James:

10 I will be late in attending the Committee on
11 Education, Culture & Youth meeting scheduled for May 6,
12 2009 at the Frits E. Lawaetz Legislative Conference Room
13 on the island of St. Croix. Therefore, I'm asking to be
14 excused. Thank you for your tolerance in this matter.

15 Sincerely,

16 Neville James

17 *****

18 May 6, 2009

19 Senator Wayne James

20 Chairman, Committee on Education, Youth & Culture
21 Meeting: Wednesday, May 6, 2009

22 Dear Chairman James:

23 I regret to inform you that I will be
24 arriving late to the Education, Youth & Culture meeting,
25 which is scheduled for this morning in St. Croix. I was

1 unable to get a timely flight departing St. Thomas.

2 Thank you for your patience.

3 Senator Nellie O'Reilly

4 *****

5 May 6, 2009

6 Honorable Wayne James

7 Chairman, Committee on Education, Youth & Culture

8 Dear Senator James:

9 Please be advised that I will not be able to
10 attend the Committee on Education, Youth & Culture
11 meeting scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 2009, as I am
12 off-island at this time. Therefore, I am requesting to
13 be excused from this meeting. Please forward all
14 correspondence relevant to this meeting to my office.

15 Should you have any questions or concerns,
16 please feel free to contact my office as they may assist
17 you.

18 Respectfully,

19 Senator Michael Thurland

20 *****

21 April 28, 2009

22 The Honorable Wayne James

23 Chairman, Committee on Education, Youth & Culture

24 Dear Senator James:

25 I will be out of the territory from April

1 28th thru May 7, 2009. I will be touring the Solar
2 Thermal Energy Plant in Nevada which relates to the
3 Economic Development, Energy & Technology Committee.

4 I apologize that I will not be available attend
5 your Committee on Education, Youth & Culture meeting
6 which is scheduled for Wednesday, May 6, 2009 at 10:00
7 a.m. in the Frits Lawaetz Conference Room on St. Croix.

8 I look forward to attending the next scheduled
9 meeting. I appreciate your understanding. Thank you.

10 Senator Craig W. Barshinger

11 *****

12 MRS. ROWE: May 4, 2009

13 Innovative Communication Corporation

14 To: The Honorable Wayne A.G. James

15 Dear Mr. Chairman:

16 I would like to thank you for the invitation
17 to testify before the Committee on Education, Youth &
18 Culture in response to Bill Number 28-0016. It is with
19 regret that I am not available to appear before your
20 committee to speak on the topic addressed in the
21 aforementioned bill.

22 Although I am not available to participate in
23 this process, I do welcome the opportunity to discuss
24 with you career development programs for students in
25 general and Innovative's leadership Development

1 *Internship Program in particular. Thank you again for*
2 *the invitation.*

3 *Regards,*

4 *Zenzile M. Hodge, SPHR*

5 *Vice-President, Human Resources*

6 *******

7 *May 4, 2009*

8 *Senator Wayne A.G. James*

9 *Dear Senator James:*

10 *I am in support of Bill Number 28-0016.*

11 *The proposed funding source for Video Lottery*
12 *proceeds by the sponsor of the Act amending Title 17,*
13 *Virgin Islands Code, Chapter 5, Section 48 to establish*
14 *the Youth Internship Program with the Department of*
15 *Education is critical to the enactment of this Act.*

16 *Bill Number 28-0016 will provide business and*
17 *industry with a Tax Exemption to partner with the*
18 *Department of Education to provide relevant training to*
19 *the students in the Virgin Islands.*

20 *The Act will provide public schools eleventh and*
21 *twelfth grade students with an opportunity to receive*
22 *high skill education that will become life-long training*
23 *experience that facilitates the transition from*
24 *secondary to post-secondary education and employment.*

25 *Additionally, funding of Bill Number 28-0016*

1 grant the Youth Internship Program to infuse more highly
2 trained workers into the workforce that will contribute
3 to the growth of the territory's economy.

4 The Act is valuable to today's youth who will
5 become tomorrow's workforce.

6 Sincerely,

7 Alicia Farrelly, Chairperson

8 St. Croix Career & Technical Education Ctr.

9 *****

10 May 5, 2009

11 The Honorable Wayne A.G. James

12 Dear Senator James:

13 This acknowledges receipt of your invitation
14 to testify at the Legislative Committee Hearing on
15 Wednesday, May 6, 2009. Unfortunately, due to
16 circumstances beyond my control, I am unable to testify
17 at this Hearing.

18 Last week I was out of the territory attending
19 the U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training
20 Administration, Region 1, State Administrators' meeting
21 and the Regional Recovery & Re-employment Forum in
22 Boston, Massachusetts.

23 This week, a delegation from USDOLEA, Region 1
24 office is in the territory visiting the Virgin Islands
25 Department of Labor to conduct a comprehensive review of

1 our Employment & Training Programs. Please refer to the
2 attached letter which gives the details of this review.

3 I apologize for any inconvenience my absence may
4 cause.

5 *****

6 May 6, 2009

7 The Honorable Senator Wayne James

8 Dear Senator James:

9 Thank you for the invitation to testify on
10 Bill Number 28-0007, a bill to establish the National
11 Guard Youth Challenge Program in the Virgin Islands.
12 Unfortunately, I am traveling on Wednesday, May 6, 2009.
13 So I will be unable to attend the committee hearing to
14 review Bill Number 28-0007.

15 However, if you would permit, I offer the
16 following comments on the bill:

17 I do fully support in principle this bill to
18 establish the Youth Challenge Program. We are certainly
19 in a period of time where many of our youth in the
20 Virgin Islands have seem to lost their way.

21 Many of our young people are growing up in homes
22 where discipline, guidance through adolescence and
23 positive role models is non-existent, due deliberate
24 dysfunction for circumstances that are out of parental
25 control.

Diane D. Andrews - Asst. Chief Reporter

1 As a result, we see these young people showing up
2 in our Juvenile Justice System.

3 I am among those who believe that if we can
4 identify these young people in the early stages of their
5 delinquent behavior and bring discipline and
6 regimentation into their lives, we can save them from
7 the "pipeline to prison and early death." I see this
8 Youth Challenge Program as a mechanism to do just that.

9 The only reservation that I have is due to the
10 current fiscal condition of the Government, whether we
11 have adequate resources to institute this program at
12 this time.

13 However, I will defer my concerns on that matter
14 to the Director of Management & Budget and to the
15 Adjutant General of the Virgin Islands National Guard.

16 My technical comments are as follows:

17 1. In Section 1003, reference is made to a
18 "Youth Court Judge" as a title. Be advised that we do
19 not have any such title in our Judicial System. We have
20 Superior Court judges or Family Court judges.

21 2. In Section 1004, there is a need to define
22 the "Challenge Academy." Moreover, in this section you
23 should make sure that we are not creating a different
24 standard for educational achievement in the Virgin
25 Islands. I will defer to the Board of Education

1 officials and the Commissioner of Education to address
2 that issue.

3 Other than the foregoing, I believe the bill is a
4 good step in redirecting the negative energies of our
5 young people. I therefore do support the bill.

6 Very truly yours,

7 Vincent F. Frazer, Esquire

8 Attorney General

9 Mr. Chair, that completes the correspondence.
10 I do have a comment from the Director of Management &
11 Budget which will be read at the appropriate time on
12 Bill 28-0007.

13 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you. We have thus far
14 been asking the sponsors of bills to:

15 1. Read their bills in their entirety into the
16 record.

17 2. And also, we have been giving time before the
18 testifiers to explain the particulars of their bill.

19 In this instance, Senator Nelson is not here.
20 What we will do however is have the Clerk read the Bill
21 Number 28-0010 in its entirety into the record and then
22 commence with the testifiers.

23 MRS. ROWE: Bill Number 28-0010; 28th Legislature
24 of the Virgin Islands

25 May 3, 2009

1 An Act amending Title 1, Virgin Islands Code,
2 Chapter 11, Section 117 commemorating Laborers on
3 Contract Day or FireBurn as a day to be revered and
4 remembered in the Virgin Islands.

5 The bill is proposed by Senator Terrence Positive
6 Nelson. And it reads:

7 Whereas, after the emancipation of enslaved
8 Africans within the Virgin Islands, work continued on
9 the plantations; and

10 Whereas, competition from European sugar-beet
11 growers and other sugar-producing countries had a
12 negative impact on the Virgin Islands' plantation-based
13 economy during the 19th Century; and

14 Whereas, after the abolition of Slavery and the
15 emancipation of the slaves, plantation growers employed
16 indentured servants and former slaves. To reduce
17 operating expenses and gain a competitive edge,
18 employers began to exploit their workers; and

19 Whereas, poor living conditions, low wages
20 prevailed; and

21 Whereas, October 1st of each year ended a
22 plantation Laborer's Contract and this gave the laborer
23 the ability to contract on a neighboring plantation for
24 the following year; and

25 Whereas on July 3, 1848 and every year after,

1 employers promised increased wages and better living and
2 working conditions; and

3 Whereas, every year the employers failed on all
4 promises; and

5 Whereas, in 1878, after all peaceable attempts to
6 demand a better quality of life failed, women on St.
7 Croix, known as queens: Queen Mary Thomas; Queen
8 Mathilda McBean; Susanna "Bottom Belly" Abramson and
9 Axeline "Queen Agnes" Solomon among others organized a
10 revolt to demand comparable wages to that of St. Croix
11 Central Factory workers; and

12 Whereas, when their demands were not met, they
13 burned down towns and Sugar Plantation. By the end of
14 the: Fireburn" which lasted one week, 879 acres of
15 Estates Prosperity to Peter's Rest on St. Croix were
16 burned, including 43 Sugar Plantations; and

17 Whereas, 1878 Labor Revolt was a struggle to
18 achieve fair Labor standards, equal pay, a higher
19 standard of living and quality of life for laborers on
20 St. Croix; and

21 Whereas, it is befitting to commemorate the
22 struggles and sacrifices of early laborers and Labor
23 Leaders by designating October 1st as Contract Day or
24 Fireburn; now therefore,

25 Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin

1 Islands;

2 Section 1. Title 1 Virgin Islands Code, Chapter
3 11, Section 171 is amended in Subsection (a) after
4 "(Labor Day)" by inserting "October 1 (Contract Day or
5 Fireburn)".

6 Bill Summary

7 The bill amends Title 1, Section 171 of the
8 Virgin Islands Code to designate October 1st of each
9 year as Contract Day in commemoration of the sacrifices
10 and struggles made in the field of Labor Relations.

11 BR09-125/February 4, 2009

12 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you. And again for the
13 record, wherever it is stated 117, it really should read
14 171. That adjustment has been made by Legal Counsel.

15 Fortunately -- first of all, let the record
16 reflect that Senator Positive Nelson, a member of the
17 committee is here and he is here in perfect time to
18 explain his bill to the testifiers; to the listening
19 audience, to the committee members and to the viewing
20 audience.

21 And after his explanation of the bill, we will
22 then commence with the testifiers. Thank you. Senator
23 Nelson, you're recognized. You may take as much as you
24 need to explain the merits of your bill.

25 SENATOR NELSON: Good morning, Mr. Chair and

1 thank you very much. Good morning to my colleague, the
2 one present and the testifiers and the audience here,
3 viewing over the Media.

4 I do apologize for being late. The plane was a
5 little late coming from St. Thomas.

6 Mr. Chair, this bill: Number 28-0010 is an
7 attempt to safeguard and preserve days that have
8 historic significance to we the people of the Virgin
9 Islands. I think it is of paramount importance that we
10 here in the territory, especially as elected leaders
11 that we preserve our history, our legacy, our culture.

12 The Virgin Islands is known as one of the
13 vanguards in fighting for Labor rights. You can say
14 that the Labor Movement started here in the Virgin
15 Islands before it started anywhere in America.

16 As a matter of fact, this is of so much
17 importance, because even while we sit here speaking
18 right now, this current administration is considering
19 taking away from us Emancipation Day, another day, even
20 of very, very, very significance to us.

21 Our culture is one -- it didn't start with
22 slavery and it's not going to end with slavery, but
23 slavery did occur. And here in the Virgin Islands, on
24 October 1st, known to us more commonly as Fireburn Day,
25 it's a day where we give reverence and thanks.

1 *However, it's not a holiday in the Virgin*
2 *Islands. And though holidays have a cost, I think this*
3 *is a cost worth paying for children to remember. And*
4 *our ancestors always said to remember; to remember; to*
5 *remember.*

6 *If we let these days be taken away from us or*
7 *these days pass without adding events and forums to*
8 *really paint the picture for our youth of today, that is*
9 *one other -- I guess, detachment that they have from*
10 *themselves and their roots.*

11 *I feel bringing days of this sort back into the*
12 *picture of their minds will help them identify with*
13 *something deeper than they're identifying with right*
14 *now. If you'll notice, our children are on a path of*
15 *self-destruction.*

16 *The reason that is happening is because they are*
17 *not attaching to the struggles of our ancestors, who*
18 *have allowed us these freedoms that we have today.*

19 *So I'm hoping that we can get this bill passed.*
20 *I'm hoping that we all see it fit to have this day to be*
21 *recognized as an official holiday, national holiday in*
22 *the Virgin Islands to be having events throughout the*
23 *schools; throughout the community.*

24 *I know that there is one event that's held every*
25 *year by UCA. They have the Fireburn celebration down*

1 here in Frederiksted. But every Virgin Islander, those
2 native, those visiting, anyone who are residing here
3 should be made to be known of the importance of this
4 day. Not only this day, but Emancipation Day is
5 something else I want to bring to the table very
6 similar, because it is recognized by the Government, but
7 not recognized by the private sector.

8 These days that should be recognized by every
9 Virgin Islands citizen, individual and corporate
10 citizen, because it's important to us.

11 We always talk about us. Well, this is important
12 to us. And I believe it is a day that should be there.
13 I'm surprised it was not there before, but I think it's
14 fitting that this day be recognized as a full-scale
15 holiday in the Virgin Islands.

16 And that's the attempt of this bill. I'm hoping
17 that I have the support of the committee members. I'm
18 hoping that I have the support of the testifiers,
19 because if we let these go and we don't preserve and
20 protect these, then we're erasing ourselves. We're
21 erasing our legacy; erasing the efforts of our ancestors
22 who have died.

23 We are still struggling today, but we have come a
24 far way with more to go and it's because of the efforts
25 of those.

1 I know the Chair have identified to us that it
2 wasn't three, it was four. That's why I have four in
3 the bill. I was going on your historic discovery. So I
4 appreciate that.

5 And our children must know the importance of days
6 like Fireburn Day and Emancipation Day. Whatever the
7 cost is, that's something that we must absorb, because
8 these days are days of significance. So I know some
9 people might talk about cost, but some things are worth
10 paying for.

11 And remembering our legacy; remembering our
12 history. Remembering the efforts of our ancestors who
13 came, struggled, died for our freedom that we have
14 today, it's well worth the cost.

15 So with that, Mr. Chair, I'm going to sit here
16 and listen to the testifiers and I'm going to have
17 questions at the end. But I'm hoping that we have the
18 support because if we don't do these things, we'll
19 continue to lose our children and our legacy and our
20 history.

21 And we already know that history has been
22 altered. You have to look a little deeper to find what
23 the truth is, because we weren't the ones recording
24 history at the time either.

25 So it's very important that when we talk about

1 history, that we look for the truth in the story, which
2 is told about individuals who have come before us. I
3 thank you very much for the time, and again, I apologize
4 for being late.

5 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you, Senator Nelson.
6 And as we explained to the audience earlier, there is
7 inclement weather and we also had a very late meeting
8 last night. So people are doing their absolute best to
9 get here on time.

10 Now, the procedure that we'd like to follow for
11 the testifiers. Whenever you speak, try to speak
12 directly into the microphone and before beginning your
13 testimony, please state your name clearly for the
14 record.

15 We'd like to begin from my right with Mr. Gerard
16 Emanuel. Please address the audience? Thank you.

17 MR. G. EMANUEL: Good morning, Honorable Senator
18 Wayne James, Chairman of the Committee on Education,
19 Youth & Culture.

20 Good morning to all of the other distinguished
21 members of the Legislature; members from the Department
22 of Education; Board of Education; testifiers; everyone
23 listening.

24 Thank you very much for inviting me here this
25 evening. I must say at the outset that I saw the

1 Hearing last night on St. Thomas and I was very
2 impressed.

3 I was proud; I was almost in tears, because for
4 the first time I saw all the testifiers agreeing and
5 basically agreeing with DPNR and local people trying to
6 carve a piece of the economic pie for themselves and not
7 selfishly. Doing things to help the rest of the Virgin
8 Islands.

9 And the meeting was conducted very well by the
10 Chair, the President sitting as the Chair. And I must
11 associate myself with some of the comments that Senator
12 Nelson made towards the end of the meeting. I thought
13 they were very appropriate.

14 So thank you for permitting me to read this
15 statement into the record.

16 As I said, my name is Gerard Emanuel. I work for
17 the Department of Education's Cultural Education
18 Division. However, my comments herein are my own as a
19 student of history and an indigene of these precious
20 islands, officially called the Virgin Islands of the
21 United States of America.

22 Therefore, it must be made clear at the outset
23 that the views espoused in this letter do not
24 necessarily reflect the views of my employers or my
25 co-worker or the Virgin Islands Government.

1 Honorable senators, thank you for the invitation
2 to appear before the committee. It is a supreme honor
3 to have an opportunity to speak on this topic which I
4 studied on the graduate level in Denmark over 30 years
5 ago.

6 Mr. Chair, I don't mean to start off with
7 controversy, but I did not see Mr. Mario Moorhead's name
8 on the list of testifiers and I consider that a serious
9 oversight if a historian of such immense knowledge,
10 consciousness, analytical acumen and insight,
11 particularly with respect to this very issue was
12 overlooked. I hope that I'm wrong and that he was
13 invited to present.

14 Unfortunately as fate would have it, I saw Mr.
15 Moorhead because I came on a certain street, Queen
16 Street, which is historic in Fredericsted, as you know.
17 And he confirmed my observation.

18 And was said earlier, his organization is one of
19 the only organizations that really authentically
20 commemorates this holiday every year. So I'm hoping
21 that he does get to come and give testimony. But any
22 how, I can't control that.

23 Honorable senators, Sankofa! Sankofa! Sankofa!
24 Senator Nelson ought to be highly commended for
25 re-introducing this milestone bill. It truly reflects

1 the African proverb of Sankofa, which you all know means
2 to return and fetch it. In other words, to look back
3 and take and important things from the past that can
4 help us today is always a good policy.

5 The good senator introduced this legislation as
6 Bill Number 27-0170 in the 27th Legislature. I appeared
7 right here and provided a statement and answered
8 questions. Apparently, the bill was not passed. Thus,
9 I commend this body for allowing it to come before this
10 august body again.

11 As I said then, a resolution will also be
12 submitted to you to honor a world-renowned Virgin
13 Islander who has had a significant impact on many of us
14 here, and on African people throughout the world. His
15 name is Dr. Yosef-ben-Jochannan.

16 I know, Mr. Chair, you're familiar with him.
17 Affectionately called "Dr. Ben".

18 He, along with Mario Moorhead, Phillip Gerard and
19 others are some of my prized mentors, and I think that
20 he has provided me with tremendous insights and
21 perspectives on history which have affected my
22 perspective, and he's helped me to understand the
23 struggle of African people of self-definition and
24 self-determination.

25 Now, I mentioned Dr. Ben because this bill is

1 clearly an act of self-definition and
2 self-determination. His entire life has been a fight to
3 identify and correct the deliberate falsehoods about
4 African people and their accomplishments throughout the
5 world, particularly in the Nile Valley region in Africa.
6 This bill, with appropriate modifications would
7 definitely meet his approval.

8 Honorable senators, even though the word Fireburn
9 has been added to the bill, it still refers to this
10 event as Contract Day.

11 Although Contract Day may be accurate from the
12 perspective of the Danish colonizers, I take issue with
13 it, because this bill is not supposed to be written from
14 perspective or to commemorate them. If this is the
15 case, I do not wish to be associated with this bill at
16 all.

17 I am however, very interested in registering my
18 remarks on the content and context of the aforementioned
19 bill, which is apparently to commemorate the action of
20 St. Croix laborers, beginning on that fateful day of
21 October in 1878.

22 Honorable senators, October 1st is a particularly
23 seminal date in V.I. history. It reflects the resolve
24 of our African ancestors to continue the fight for the
25 improvement of their living and working conditions on

1 St. Croix in an event they called the "Fireburn".

2 Yes, they continued the fight for
3 self-determination. Therefore I would respectfully like
4 to honor their right of self-identification or their
5 rights of event identification and refer to the proposed
6 holiday as "Fireburn Day only. Period.

7 October 1st also proves that Virgin Islanders
8 have a long history of organizing and taking appropriate
9 actions to improve their lot after the end of Chattel
10 Slavery in 1848.

11 In fact, while studying in Denmark, this event
12 was the focus of a major research paper that I prepared.
13 It was published by the former Department of
14 Conservation & Cultural Affairs in a publication
15 entitled "Freedom's Flame" in 1981.

16 Therefore, remembering October 1st is a timely
17 and significant gesture to those who came before us and
18 as the popular saying goes, "on whose shoulders we
19 stand."

20 Honorable senators, some of you may ask why
21 should we consider the "Fireburn" of 1878 to be
22 "appropriate action". Wasn't it just a riot where
23 Virgin Islanders destroyed private property and thus
24 violated the law as has been written in several
25 "his-tory" texts?

1 Honorable senators, I stand behind my statement
2 that the actions of our ancestors were highly
3 appropriate, because they had no legal or non-violent
4 mechanisms to get proper redress for their grievances.

5 Further, my research indicates that it was not a
6 riot. Plans had been made to take action on October 1,
7 1878 as testified to by William Holder in the court
8 proceedings followed the events. We need to stop any
9 reference to such an important event as being a riot.

10 Honorable senators, it must be remembered that
11 the majority of the laborers on St. Croix, from the days
12 of physical slavery in the 17th Century up until 1936,
13 had no say in the political process in the Virgin
14 Islands.

15 It must also be remembered that these persons
16 always represented the majority of persons living on St.
17 Croix.

18 From the time of the 1st Colonial Law of 1852,
19 and even with its amendments in 1863 and 1906 and even
20 further with the change of Colonial master from Denmark
21 to the United States in 1917, the African laborers on
22 St. Croix were the majority of the population, but most
23 of them could not vote or run for office.

24 They were completely excluded from the political
25 process by law, due to excessive property and income

1 requirements they could never meet. To put it plainly,
2 to vote and run for office from the time Europeans
3 instituted slavery on St. Croix in the mid 1600's until
4 the Organic Act of 1936, you had to be a free male of
5 "unblemished character", make a certain amount of money,
6 or own property that generated a certain amount of
7 money.

8 This is one of the critical reasons why we
9 celebrate the "Fireburn" and why I say that it was
10 appropriate action on behalf of the laborers.

11 Honorable senators, when we view these actions in
12 the proper context, we will see that our African
13 Ancestors had no alternative but to resort to violence.

14 Further, until the Honorable David Hamilton
15 Jackson won the right to form a Labor Union and print a
16 newspaper that focused on news from the perspectives of
17 the laborers, our ancestors could not even organize to
18 demand their rights as laborers.

19 It is clear that our ancestors had no non-violent
20 or legal way to address and redress the political,
21 social and economic injustices that they experienced
22 until the passage of the Organic Act of 1936.

23 When we study U.S. History and examine the
24 actions of the colonists in what is now the United
25 States of America, we remember what is euphemistically

1 known as the "Boston Tea Party."

2 At this "party", the colonists burned and
3 destroyed property while disguised as Native Americans.
4 This event was regarded as terroristic by the British
5 Government.

6 Likewise, the "Fireburn" was considered the same
7 by the Danes and the planters on St. Croix. However,
8 when one reads U.S. History books, the Boston Tea Party
9 is regarded as a very important patriotic event by
10 freedom fighters.

11 Thus, if the "American" founding fathers" could
12 justifiably destroy property because they were being
13 taxed and could not participate in the political process
14 in England, it is not hard to justify the legitimacy of
15 the "Fireburn of 1878."

16 In our case on St. Croix, laws were passed in the
17 famous Labor Act of 1849, which kept our ancestors in
18 slave-like conditions for 30 years after slavery was
19 supposed to have ended.

20 If the American Colonists could rationalize and
21 justify their "Boston Tea Party" when they had local
22 political authority and representation, and were not in
23 slave-like conditions, we can surely understand and
24 appreciate the "Fireburn of 1878, while our ancestors
25 were in slave-like conditions, and had no political

1 power whether locally or in Denmark.

2 Therefore, honorable senators, Bill Number
3 28-0010 is overdue and fully justified. It formalizes
4 and institutionalizes an integral part of the history,
5 culture, identity and yes ethos of the people of the
6 Virgin Islands, which is rapidly eroding even as this
7 letter is being read.

8 Now I would like to recommend a few changes to
9 this important bill. First, the fifth "WHEREAS"
10 beginning on page 2, line 7, could be amended as
11 follows:

12 "WHEREAS, in 1878, after all peaceable attempts
13 to demand a better quality of life failed, several women
14 on St. Croix, including Mary Thomas, Mathilde McBean,
15 Susanna Abramson, Axelline Solomon, Rebecca Frederick
16 and others, together with men, including Joe Parris,
17 James de Silva, Joseph LaGrange, John Lewis, Thomas
18 Graydon, Francis Leonard, William Jones, William Arnold
19 and others organized and led a revolt to repeal the
20 Labor Act of 1849, demand comparable wages to that of
21 St. Croix Central Factory workers and obtain better
22 working and living conditions."

23 Honorable Mr. Chair, you in particular will
24 appreciate the rationale for the above suggestions,
25 particularly since more research has to be conducted

1 regarding who all were the "leaders" or played key roles
2 in the "Fireburn" and who all were called "Queens."

3 I understand that recent research you conducted
4 has revealed that Susanna Abramson was a fourth "Queen",
5 even though we have historically only mentioned three.

6 Those of us who figured prominently in this
7 monumental even in V.I. history. I thus will not
8 contest the accuracy of your research.

9 I instead welcome it because it has made me now
10 realize due to the benefit of age and hindsight, that
11 irrespective of who all were queens or not, we really
12 ought to list all of the names that we know were
13 mentioned in the historical record, whether they were
14 queens or not, and indicate that there possibly were
15 others unmentioned in these documents, whose roles were
16 equally important.

17 Furthermore, Mr. Chair, the male leaders should
18 be mentioned by name as well, because they also were
19 important in the outcome of the entire effort. So when
20 this event becomes a holiday and is commemorated, all of
21 these persons should be honored.

22 Honorable Chairman, this is consistent with your
23 position on a bill being considered to offer
24 scholarships to Valedictorians and Salutatorians. You
25 indicated that it might be unfair to single out only

1 those who excelled in all areas and neglect those who
2 excelled in only one or two.

3 I fully agree with your point and wish to apply
4 its essence to the "Fireburn." Thus, let us not only
5 honor the "leaders" that we have uncovered, for without
6 followers, none of the events of October 1, 1878 and its
7 aftermath would have or could have succeeded.

8 Additionally, honorable senators, I mentioned the
9 Labor Act of 1849 because it was the fundamental reason
10 for the "Fireburn." Documents in the Royal Archives and
11 Newspaper Archives in Denmark provide evidence of this.

12 Testimony indicates that laborers had said that
13 on October 1, 1878 they were going to fight for higher
14 wages. It is also well documented that the workers were
15 upset with many of the provisions of the Labor Act of
16 1849 and were going to do something about it on October
17 1, 1879. Therefore, the court records document that
18 there had been forethought and planning prior to that
19 fateful October date.

20 This information should conclusively dispel the
21 notion that the "Fireburn" was merely a riot. Our
22 ancestors would not simply jump up one day and burn down
23 an entire island.

24 Our history does not support such actions. In
25 fact, our history supports exactly the opposite

1 beginning in 1733 with the successful insurrection on
2 St. John to the plans to take over St. John to the plans
3 to take over St. Croix in 1749 and 1753 and most
4 importantly to the successful emancipation events of
5 July 3, 1848.

6 Therefore, the Firebun" was merely one in a long
7 succession of organized movements, orchestrated by our
8 ancestors that succeeded in achieving their objectives.

9 As such, I also would like to see an amendments
10 to this bill requiring that the word "riot" be stricken
11 from all history texts when the "Firebun" is mentioned.

12 If the American Colonists could have their
13 "Firebun" called a "Tea Party" and not a riot or act of
14 terrorism, so can we.

15 All people have the inalienable right of
16 self-definition and self-determination. As such, Virgin
17 Islanders have the right to use the terminology that we
18 think most appropriately and accurately reflects the
19 circumstances within context, from our perspective, just
20 as the American Colonists and other persons who write
21 their history do.

22 Also, Mr. Chair, on line 15, page 2, the 43
23 plantations mentioned should be further researched. I
24 have seen 51 and even as high as 53 mentioned in Dr.
25 Dookhan's history book on the V.I.

1 *Finally, Mr. Chair, my major recommendation is to*
2 *strike the word "Contract" and "Contract Day" in several*
3 *but not all places where they appear in the bill, and*
4 *insert "Firebun" and Firebun Day" respectively where*
5 *applicable.*

6 *The first place to do this is on Page 1, in the*
7 *first sentence where the specific part of the V.I. Code*
8 *to be amended is referenced. The second place is on*
9 *Page 2, in the last WHEREAS, and also in Section 1, line*
10 *23.*

11 *The final location I found is in the Bill Summary*
12 *on Page 3.*

13 *Honorable senators, it is vitally important to*
14 *utilize the term "Firebun Day" as the name for this*
15 *holiday. It is the singular term that aptly depicts the*
16 *essence of the event, which has brought cause to this*
17 *bill.*

18 *"Contract Day" simply does not fit. That was the*
19 *colonizer's term for the day and using it would be*
20 *wholly inconsistent with the philosophical and*
21 *psychological bases for this act of "event*
22 *self-definition" and "cultural self-determination."*

23 *This is OUR celebration, and it ought to be*
24 *viewed totally from OUR perspective just like all other*
25 *people celebrate their holidays using their own*

1 victorious names to generate a sense of national pride,
2 unity and belonging.

3 Contract Day is reminiscent of involuntary
4 bondage. Firebun Day distinctly reminds us of our
5 ancestors' successful actions to liberate themselves
6 from economic bondage.

7 Let us do the right thing and employ the name
8 used by our ancestors in 1878. Since this bill
9 commemorates the specific date on which their actions
10 were taken, their nomenclature ought to be utilized.

11 Thank you once again, Mr. Chair, and I would be
12 happy to receive and answer any questions or clarify
13 anything that you may wish either in writing or in
14 person at a later point in time.

15 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Emanuel for
16 your testimony. I'd like to clarify a couple of things.

17 When testifiers are invited to present, they are
18 recommended both by the sponsor of the bill and by the
19 committee. So we go based on the recommendations of the
20 sponsor, as well as we sit down and think of the people
21 that are most appropriate for the bill.

22 Some people could have been included. Were not,
23 for various reasons. Others that will be invited to
24 give testimony subsequently will be announced. So the
25 procedure is something that changes from one day to the

1 next, based on the particulars of the bill and the
2 process along the way.

3 So I don't think anybody who has not been invited
4 for this particular Hearing at this particular juncture
5 should feel in any way slighted or overlooked. This is
6 far from finished and lot more complicated than it may
7 see at this particular juncture. So I'm sure everybody
8 will have a chance to state his opinion on the record.

9 Senator Nelson.

10 SENATOR NELSON: Mr. Chair, I would just like to
11 add a Point of Information that Mr. Moorhead was invited
12 to testify when we first had the bill last year, and he
13 was not interested at the time.

14 We did not approach him this year. We just went
15 on the same notion. But it might be an oversight that
16 it did not, but we did ask and he was not interested in
17 coming. I just wanted the record to be clear that I too
18 thought that he could have added a powerful testimony.
19 Thank you very much.

20 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you for the
21 clarification.

22 Before we proceed with the other testifiers, I'd
23 like to draw reference to what may have caused much of
24 the confusion over the years as to whether there were
25 three queens or not.

1 One of the great books of St. Croix history was
2 written by Florence Lewisson. The book is entitled St.
3 Croix Under Seven Flags. Those of us that went to St.
4 Joseph's were privileged to use this book as our Text
5 book at one point in High School for Virgin Islands
6 history.

7 It is a book that was published, if I remember
8 correctly, in 1970 or '71. It was copyright in 1970.
9 Has long been out of print. And if ever available on
10 the Internet, you'll find it in the vicinity of \$400,
11 \$500. For those of us that have this book, treasure it.
12 Fortunately, I have more than one copy, but mine gets
13 used. And as a result, this is how it looks.

14 But in any case, on Page 314, and this is why to
15 a large extent, the misunderstandings have occurred and
16 have continued.

17 Because when a great historian does his or her
18 research and publishes his or her work, people, as we
19 trained in academia, we sites that resource and in some
20 instances, when that resource for whatever reason was
21 not fully correct, everybody sites this incorrect
22 source, allowing the error to continue, all in good
23 faith, based on their high regards for the original
24 author.

25 On Page 314, the great Florence Lewisson wrote:

1 Queen Mary was the one to become infamous for her
2 ferocious part in the great Fireburn, as it has been
3 called ever since.

4 She, it was who directed the gangs of women and
5 children to the rum barrels or kegs of kerosene used to
6 fire the stores and houses in Frederiksted. Other
7 squads of women and children were headed by Queen Agnes
8 and Queen Mathilde, also known as Bottom Belly. And
9 that is where the error occurred. This is the fact.

10 The fact is that of the over 400 people arrested
11 in relation to Fireburn, 40 were eventually tried and
12 found guilty. And I have the names of those 40 people
13 on this record from the Danish Archives and I'll read it
14 into the official record today.

15 And let me do that now, as a matter of fact. The
16 40 people who eventually were tried -- as I said, over
17 400 were arrested after preliminary investigations, some
18 were released. The 40 who were officially tried were as
19 follows:

20 James Emanuel Benjamin of Mount Pleasant

21 John Hodge of Fredensborg

22 George Henry of Sprat Hall

23 Francis Harrison of Prosperity

24 Emanuel Jacobs of Prosperity

25 David Cameron of LaGrange

1 *Sussana Abramson, alias Bottom Belly of*
2 *Prosperity*

3 *Isaac Anthony of Frederiksted*
4 *Axelline E. (Elizabeth) Solomon (Agnes) of*
5 *Bethlehem*

6 *Mathilde McBean of Cane*

7 *Joseph Bowell of Hogensborg*

8 *Joseph Spencer of Hogensborg*

9 *Hans Christian of William's Delight*

10 *John Thomas Sobers of Beck's Grove*

11 *Christopher Samuel of Mount Pleasant*

12 *George Michael of Envy*

13 *Thomas Crichlow of Jealousy*

14 *William James of Grove Place*

15 *George Callendar of Enfield Green*

16 *Henry England of Jealousy*

17 *William Arnold of Upper Love*

18 *Williams Barnes of Rust-of-Twist*

19 *George Simmonds of Barren Spot*

20 *Richard Gibbs (Sealey) of Barren Spot*

21 *Edward Lewis of Mount Pleasant*

22 *Henry Baker of Hogensborg*

23 *Joseph Briggs of Friedensborg*

24 *William Henry; Christian Martin and -- I can't*
25 *make out this first name, but the last name is Gittens*

1 of Lower Love

2 George Cambridge of Upper Love

3 James Cox of Diamond

4 Joseph William of Windsor

5 Mary Thomas of Sprat Hall

6 Johannes Samuel, also called Banborg of

7 Frederiksted

8 Joseph James of Enfield Green

9 John Samuel of Anguilla

10 Thomas James, also of Anguilla

11 James Griffith of Anguilla

12 Rebecca Frederick of Cane

13 *****

14 Now, the Danish law at the time stated that
15 anybody in prison for a period of four years or more had
16 to serve the period exceeding four years in Denmark.

17 The four people of these 40 people who were to
18 serve a sentence beyond four years were: Mary Thomas;
19 Mathilde McBean, Sussana Abramson and Axelline Solomon.
20 They are the women who on board the ship, Thea, T-h-e-a,
21 in 1882 after having served their four years on St.
22 Croix, from 1878 to 1882, were put on board a ship
23 called Thea and on July 19, 1882, they arrived in
24 Copenhagen and were to be take to the Women's Prison the
25 next day.

1 *This is the newspaper article, a copy of it from*
2 *the Neath Often Blood that indicates that these four*
3 *women from the Virgin Islands have arrived in Copenhagen*
4 *to serve their prison sentences at the women's prison.*

5 *And in effect translates to four, not three, the*
6 *four Negresses from St. Croix have come to Copenhagen to*
7 *serve their prison sentences for their involvement in*
8 *Fireburn and they will tomorrow be taken to the Women's*
9 *Prison in Copenhagen.*

10 *Now, this is the document where the four women*
11 *checked into the Women's Prison in Copenhagen. Mathilde*
12 *McBean; Mary Thomas; Sussana Abramson; Axelline*
13 *Elizabeth Solomon, alias, Agnes.*

14 *These documents indicate everything from what*
15 *they were wearing; what jewelry they had on their*
16 *bodies; the amount of children they had; their ages.*
17 *All of this information has been brought back to the*
18 *territory for the purpose of days like today. So that*
19 *the people of the Virgin Islands can know from whence*
20 *they came.*

21 *As we speak, 1600 pages of the Fireburn records*
22 *that were housed in the Danish National Archives in*
23 *Copenhagen are being copied and are going to be sent to*
24 *the territory. CD's are going to be prepared of all of*
25 *those documents and distributed to all of the schools;*

1 the Archives; the Universities.

2 I have a bag full of information here on
3 Fireburn. The names; what happened; which estates were
4 burned; which estates were spared. Who was arrested but
5 then released; letters describing these queens in the
6 prison with their children on their arms. These women,
7 collectively, at the time of Fireburn had 18 children.

8 Bottom Belly had nine and each of the other three
9 had three. Those 18 children have children,
10 grandchildren, great-grandchildren, all unbeknownst to
11 us today, because of a concerted effort by the powers
12 that were at the time to snuff their contribution to
13 this territory from the history books from our memory.

14 I, however, have gone through the Archives page
15 by page by page, day by day, day by day for the past 20
16 years. I remember I was a little boy when my father
17 told me about the Fireburn story. Right in Frederiksted
18 and he said two of them were directly related to you.

19 So it went into my soul that day as a little boy,
20 and I have since then devoted my life towards
21 resurrecting not only these four people, but everybody
22 else involved, not only with this historic event, but
23 other historic events of this island. And I remember
24 not as a little boy, but when I went to Fort Christian
25 -- again, excuse me. I don't normally cry in public.

1 But this is something that is a part of our
2 souls. It has to be addressed. I went to Fort
3 Christian in Christiansted and I must have been -- I
4 think 17 or 18 and asked the resident historian to give
5 information on Fireburn. And the gentleman who is a
6 renown historian, told me that they should not be
7 regarded with any significance in our history because
8 they were not nothing but criminals and rebel-rousers
9 and we have venerated them beyond where they deserve to
10 be placed.

11 And I remember walking out of that meeting. I
12 must have been 16 or 17 years old saying to myself: You
13 must think that I am a fool. Because of all Virgin
14 Islanders and we have lots of great ones.

15 We have Wilmoth Blyden, who is the father of Pan
16 Africanism, who inspired Marcus Garvey and the whole
17 host of them. We have Rothschild Francis who is the
18 father of the Organic Act, as we know it.

19 Who went to Washington, DC to argue on our
20 behalf. We have great physicists and historians and
21 doctors and lawyers and judges and clergy and all these
22 people. And we've had them from the beginning. But of
23 all Virgin Islanders, regardless of their great
24 contributions to this territory, we have put on a
25 particularly high pedestal: Buddoe, because of

1 contributions to Emancipation in 1848. The four queens:
2 Mary Thomas; Sussana Abramson; Mathilde McBean and
3 Axelline Solomon, because of their contributions to
4 Fireburn and D. Hamilton Jackson, because of his
5 contributions to the freedom of the Press; Labor
6 Movement; Labor Unions and all of his wonderful works.
7 We singled out six people of all the great people of the
8 Virgin Islands to put on a particularly high pedestal.

9 Why in the world would Crucian people, given all
10 the great people that they could have chosen from,
11 chosen those four women if they were not nothing but
12 rebel-rousers who did absolutely nothing for us? So
13 that was the day when I decided yes, I want to be a
14 lawyer. And I became a lawyer.

15 And yes, I want to be a Fashion Designer and I am
16 a Fashion Designer, but I decided I also need to be a
17 historian, to keep my head straight. Because if I don't
18 find out for myself what happened here, other people
19 will continually lead me down the wrong road.

20 And so, as a result of that, I have devoted a
21 part of my adult life to this cause.

22 And so, to the extent, Senator Nelson, that any
23 of the work that I have done can support your efforts
24 and any other efforts that are going to come from these
25 types of efforts, I am more than at your disposal.

1 All of this information will be put into the
2 official record and all of the information is on its way
3 from Denmark to be put in the official record and
4 Archives of the Virgin Islands.

5 Again, I apologize. I hope you understand, but
6 we will now --

7 (WHEREUPON, THE AUDIENCE INTERRUPTED WITH
8 APPLAUSE.)

9 I would now like to ask the second testifier Mr.
10 Brown to give his testimony on behalf of the bill.
11 Thank you.

12 MR. R. BROWN: Good morning. Good morning,
13 Senator Wayne James, Chairman of the Committee on
14 Education, Youth & Culture.

15 I must say from the onset that after listening to
16 your presentation and that of Mr. Emanuel, that I have
17 little to offer, except to say that I am here in full
18 support of this bill.

19 By way of introduction, since this is my first
20 appearance before this body, I would like to again greet
21 everyone. Senator James, Senator Hill, Senator Nelson
22 and Senator O'Reilly, as well as the listening and
23 viewing public.

24 I received an invitation yesterday to appear in
25 support or to give testimony on Bill Number 28-0012 and

1 then much later on in the day, I became aware of the
2 bill that is now before us, 28-0010.

3 I'd like to give a brief view of -- I'm a little
4 nervous, so bear with me.

5 By way of introduction, I'd like to just give a
6 brief introduction of myself and that of Our Virgin
7 Islands Labor Union.

8 I am a member of the St. Croix Country Day
9 Graduating Class of 1981. Upon graduating from that
10 school, I enlisted in the active Regular Army of the
11 United States Armed Forces where I served for a combine
12 total of six years, including active and inactive tour
13 of duty.

14 At the end, I received a good conduct medal,
15 honorable discharge. I have lived on St. Croix for 30
16 years plus; 30 years a little bit, which counts.

17 Some of you in the listening audience and viewing
18 audience may know me or be familiar with me from my
19 various previous places of employment. Upon return into
20 the territory from serving in the Military, I began
21 working at the Airport as a Ticket Agent and later on as
22 a Supervisor for a number of Air Lines at the Henry
23 Rohlsen Airport, which was known back then as the
24 Alexander Hamilton Airport.

25 I began working with Sun Air, which transitioned

1 into Eastern Metro Express. And then finally, I worked
2 for Pan American World Airways.

3 I later on, after Hurricane Hugo struck us here
4 in 1989, I began to work as a live performing musician
5 for several years. Mainly on St. John and on St. Thomas
6 and St. Croix to a lesser extent. Thereafter, I did the
7 same thing in Puerto Rico where I resided for five years
8 playing music as an Ambassador to the territory,
9 somewhat.

10 Upon my return in 1997, I worked as a Customer
11 Service representative at St. Croix Cable TV and later
12 on at Innovative Telephone. I also worked as a Car
13 Salesman at Caribbean Auto Mart.

14 I'm saying all this just basically to lay the
15 foundation to show that I have worked and I have some
16 background in terms of what I do as a Labor
17 representative.

18 I am the father of three children. My oldest is
19 23 years old, who have already completed four years of
20 college at Savannah State College. My son, 19, is just
21 completing his first year of college at the St. Croix
22 campus of the University of the Virgin Islands and I
23 have a six year old. I always tell people that he's six
24 going on ten, because they're so advanced these days.

25 And again, I mentioned that because I believe

1 it's important for those who don't know me to recognize
2 that I do have some experience that I can share
3 regarding my concern with youth in the territory.

4 I became a member of OVILU in September of 1999
5 and I must thank Senator Nelson and other individuals,
6 including Bryan Douglas, Myrna Pickard, Dean "Feel I"
7 McMillan, Paul "General" Payne, Gonzalo Rivera, just to
8 name a few. These are some of the people who had the
9 foresight to recognize that it was time to form a local
10 Labor Organization here in the territory again.

11 We as members are very grateful for the foresight
12 and recognizing the need to form this organization.
13 OVILU is a local Labor organization. It was formed and
14 incorporated on May 20, 1999. To date, OVILU has
15 approximately 800 plus members and I want to take the
16 opportunity now to invite those who haven't visited us
17 recently to come to one of our meetings as we still need
18 to hear from you.

19 We would like your assistance in furthering the
20 ideals and providing through an honest and efficient
21 Labor representation. OVILU has a vested interest in
22 the children and that of this community.

23 We appreciate the hard work and dedication of our
24 people of yesteryear and who have sacrificed greatly
25 under harsh and stressful conditions to provide for the

1 younger generation.

2 We regard ourselves, OVILU, our Virgin Islands
3 Labor Union has a progressive people paving the way. I
4 must add at this point that I'm not as prepared as I
5 would like to be, again, initially, I've gotten
6 invitations to give testimony on Bill 28-0012.

7 And so, the letter that I have placed on record
8 actually incorporates both bills and to a greater
9 extent, it's in reference to Bill 28-0012. So I would
10 ask if you prefer that I read the letter into the record
11 at this point. Or should I wait until you announce Bill
12 Number 28-0012.

13 SENATOR W. JAMES: In the interest of time, we
14 can have you read that letter when those bills come up.
15 And then we can then move at the conclusion of your
16 testimony that's relevant to this bill, we can move on
17 to Mr. George Tyson. And then we'll read into the
18 record a letter from Mr. Myron Jackson.

19 Again, don't feel nervous. Just take your time.

20 MR. BROWN: Thank you. Let me conclude by saying
21 in regards to this bill, I believe that the bill is
22 timely. It's overdue.

23 As a matter of fact, I believe that Fireburn Day
24 as it is commonly known, should be recognized by all
25 citizens. Government and private sector employees

1 alike, small businesses; corporations and visitors to
2 the territory.

3 It should be recognized for its significance to
4 the history of the descendants of African slaves in the
5 Caribbean and the Virgin Islands of the United States of
6 America, St. Croix in particular.

7 Since becoming a member of OVILU, to date, we
8 have consistently promoted the significance of October
9 1st to the history of St. Croix and we have in fact,
10 submitted proposals at the Bargaining Table suggesting
11 that employers agree to recognize this day as a paid
12 holiday for its employees.

13 I respectfully would like to, if it's
14 appropriate, attach my support to the presentation that
15 was given earlier. I wholeheartedly agree with some of
16 the suggestions that were made regarding inclusion of
17 the men who were involved on that day that we commonly
18 refer to as Fireburn Day.

19 With that again, at the appropriate time, as you
20 suggested, I will read the entire letter into the
21 record. And I thank you again, Senator Wayne James for
22 the opportunity to be here. I think the second time
23 around I'll do a little better. Thank you for the
24 indulgence.

25 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Brown. This is

1 a learning process for all of us. Those of us freshmen
2 senators, we're learning as we go along. Thank God for
3 the senior senators that assist us along the way,
4 otherwise we won't be able to get through the procedures
5 either.

6 So don't in any way feel embarrassed. Your
7 presentation is on point and it's on the record, and
8 we'll bring you up in the second round after we address
9 the other bills.

10 MR. BROWN: Thank you.

11 SENATOR W. JAMES: I'd like now Mr. George Tyson,
12 Historian present his testimony on the bill. Mr. Tyson,
13 will you please state your name clearly for the record
14 before beginning?

15 MR. G. TYSON: Good morning, Senator James;
16 Senator Hill; Senator Nelson; Senator O'Reilly; members
17 of the audience and members of the public who are
18 listening to this proceeding.

19 I want to introduce myself. I am a historian and
20 have been a historian of the Virgin Islands and the
21 Caribbean for the last 40 years. I've written several
22 publications relating to the history of the Virgin
23 Islands and the Caribbean.

24 I want to thank you for inviting me to make a
25 statement concerning Bill Number 28-0010, a very

1 important and long overdue piece of legislation.

2 And I want to note at this point that I have
3 turned in an article that I wrote several years ago
4 relative to the Fireburn, which gives quite a bit of
5 detail, but also shows my approach and my perspective on
6 the event.

7 As a long-time historian and former teacher of
8 Virgin Islands and Caribbean History, I can state
9 unequivocally that Fireburn was one of the most
10 important events in Virgin Islands and Caribbean
11 History, and that I wholeheartedly support the intent of
12 this legislation to commemorate it on an annual basis
13 every October 1st.

14 Why was this event so significant? First and
15 foremost, because it was a successful popular protest, a
16 collective blow for Freedom delivered by thousands of
17 disenfranchised Crucians, a blow that brought an end,
18 once and for all, to the vicious, violent and oppressive
19 system of slavery imposed upon the African population of
20 St. Croix by Danish colonialism and capitalistic greed.

21 As such, it represented a powerful rejection of
22 privilege, racism, economic exploitation, social
23 injustice and colonialism, a rejection heard and heeded,
24 not only in Denmark, but throughout the Atlantic world.

25 The Fireburn was on the front page of newspapers

1 in New York, London, Paris and Copenhagen, and it was
2 the topic of conversation and discussion not only among
3 men of power and privilege, but of common people, black
4 and white, who were waging their own struggles against
5 capitalism, colonialism and racism.

6 On this particular day, during this particular
7 event in 1878, several thousand African-Caribbean
8 working people of St. Croix spoke not only for
9 themselves, but for millions of their compatriots
10 throughout the world.

11 It is a day and event of which every Virgin
12 Islander should be proud, and one can only wonder why it
13 has taken so long to commemorate it.

14 And I congratulate Senator Nelson for pushing
15 this Act forward, once, twice and keep doing it as long
16 as it takes, please.

17 Fireburn not only destroyed the last vestiges of
18 slavery and feudalism on St. Croix, it broke open the
19 door to the modern forms of Labor Relations, Labor
20 organizations and Labor legislation that we enjoy today.

21 Fireburn, which can be seen as the offspring of
22 the 1848 Emancipation Rebellion and the great-grandchild
23 of the St. John Revolution of 1733-1734 was also the
24 mother of the successful General Strike organized in
25 1916 by David Hamilton Jackson and other members of the

1 newly-established St. Croix Labor Union.

2 It was the aunt of the Silver Strike, organized
3 in St. Thomas in 1892, (an event also deserving of
4 commemoration).

5 And it is the great-grandmother of those among us
6 who organize, advocate, negotiate, protect and
7 occasionally, perhaps too occasionally strike on behalf
8 of the vast majority of our population who are ordinary
9 working people struggling against powerful vested
10 interests.

11 Remembering and celebrating Fireburn is a
12 powerful affirmation that their cause is just and right
13 and will never be suppressed.

14 Last but not least, I believe Fireburn to be
15 significant and worthy of commemoration because, as more
16 fully discussed in the article that I have given you, it
17 was an effective collaboration of working people born on
18 St. Croix and born on other Caribbean islands.

19 Natives and immigrants joined in protect on
20 behalf of freedom, justice and a better quality of life,
21 a solidarity that repeated itself in the General Strike
22 of 1916 and subsequent Labor mobilization, action and
23 organization in the Virgin Islands, the Caribbean and
24 the United States.

25 In conclusion, I would like to take this

1 opportunity to offer some recommendations relative to
2 the wording of the current bill.

3 For reasons of historical accuracy and
4 completeness, I recommend:

5 1. Substituting "contract immigrant laborers"
6 for indentured servants" in Line 7, Page 1.

7 2. Before Line 9, Page 1, insert: "Whereas, on
8 January 26, 1859, the Danish Government issued a Labor
9 Act that restricted the bargaining power and mobility of
10 plantation laborers by fixing their wages and requiring
11 that on October 1st they sign a contract to work on a
12 particular plantation for an entire year;

13 3. Delete Lines 1 thru 6, Page 2 and substitute;
14 "Whereas thousands of laborers from other
15 Caribbean islands who had been encouraged to immigrate
16 to St. Croix in order to increase the Labor Pool were
17 also subjected to the same harsh and unjust conditions
18 of labor; and

19 Whereas, natives and immigrants found it
20 increasingly difficult to remove themselves from St.
21 Croix and"

22 Those are my specific recommendations in my
23 statement, but I would like at this point to associate
24 myself very strongly with Gerard Emanuel's point about
25 Contract Day. I think that should be removed for a

1 variety of reasons.

2 As Mr. Emanuel has pointed out, it is a day which
3 was oppressive to the workers, not something that we
4 should be celebrating or commemorating.

5 It was something that kept them from moving about
6 the country, tied them to plantations and subject them
7 to the harshness of the people who ran those
8 plantations.

9 And they couldn't get away from it because the
10 contract bound them to it. And every year they had to
11 sign a contract to do the same thing again.

12 The other point I'd like to make about that is
13 that there was a follow-up, a little known follow-up,
14 but a very important follow-up to Fireburn in 1878 and
15 that was the General Strike in 1879 immediately after
16 October 1st of that year. And I talk about that and
17 describe that in my article, and I urge that you all
18 read it.

19 But in that event, the issue was that the
20 laborers on St. Croix did not want to sign a contract
21 any more. They did not want to have a Contract Day that
22 bound them to the plantation.

23 That was the big issue for them and they staged
24 the General Strike to force the planters to have no
25 contracts at all. And they argued specifically against

1 the notion of a contract. And pointed out that
2 contracts were not required in other Caribbean islands.

3 So for them, speaking for themselves, as you
4 would see from my article, they opposed this day and
5 staged a strike because they opposed it. So I think to
6 honor their intentions and their sense of what was
7 wrong, we need to remove mention of that day as part of
8 this commemoration.

9 Certainly, we could talk about it, but we
10 shouldn't celebrate.

11 Secondly, I think the bill should be a little
12 more specific in terms of the ways in which the day
13 should be commemorated, specifically in terms of
14 education and so on.

15 I heard Senator Nelson speak a little more
16 specifically about the fact that this is going to be a
17 holiday, a public holiday which would be a day that
18 people would have off work.

19 But I think that all needs to be spelled out a
20 little bit more.

21 And thirdly, following up on your point of view,
22 I would like to point out, whereas, Fireburn has been
23 widely written about. We have only scratched the
24 surface of knowing what and why it happen. And we've
25 only learned about what happened primarily from people

1 who are not associated with those who made it happen?

2 We need to know from the point of view of the
3 working people who were involved in Fireburn and we need
4 to know where more about it from the point of view of
5 their descendants today.

6 In order to properly educate ourselves and future
7 generations about this pivotal event, it is imperative
8 that we locate, translate and make available for
9 research and educational purposes the vast body of
10 documentation found in Danish, America and British
11 Archives.

12 And I say British because many of the laborers
13 who were involved in this event came from other
14 Caribbean islands, particularly Barbados, St. Kitts,
15 Nieves, Antigua and St. Eustatius.

16 And we're talking about thousands of people, not
17 just a handful. And many of them were among those who
18 were arrested. Many of them who were among those whose
19 names you read on that list, and many of them were among
20 the people who were executed, which we don't talk about
21 yet by the Government because of their involvement in
22 this event.

23 Accordingly, I urge an appropriation be attached
24 to this bill that allows for the copying, translation
25 and publication of documentation relating to the

1 Fireburn and its causes. And that will make it possible
2 for the history of this event to be re-written by Virgin
3 Islanders employing a Virgin Islands perspective. And
4 we need more of that in order to throw off some of these
5 inaccuracies and these misperceptions and so that have
6 passed down on to us through the History books up to
7 now.

8 We need to take this as an opportunity to begin
9 re-writing Virgin Islands history. Thank you for this
10 opportunity.

11 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Tyson.
12 Interestingly, in the effort to erase the principle
13 characters of Fireburn from our minds, the 18 children
14 of those four women, because the women were in prison
15 from 1878 until 1887, Sussana Abramson, Bottom Belly,
16 having been released the year before, because she was
17 the eldest of the four.

18 It is believed, and we have to confirm her date
19 of birth. But she was in her late 40s or early 50s at
20 the time of her involvement in Fireburn. The records as
21 we have them now indicate that she was 46 at the time.

22 By the time she went to prison, she was 50. By
23 the time she went to prison in Denmark. She was 46 when
24 she went to prison here. But just to show you how the
25 individual research has brought light to this subject,

1 I'll use Queen Mathilde, because to a large extent,
2 because she was born on St. Croix. Queen Mary was born
3 in Antigua. Queen Mathilde, Agnes and Queen Susanna,
4 better known as Bottom Belly, were born here. And as we
5 all know, the Danes kept copious records and they kept
6 them meticulously.

7 And so, if one wants to find information in the
8 Danish Archives, in the Danish West Indies Archives, the
9 Virgin Islands Archives, with a good pair of eyes and
10 some patience, you can find a lot of information.

11 Now, this young girl, Mattilde who was born in
12 1857, September, had just turn 21 on October 1, 1878.
13 She turned 21 nine days before.

14 She had by that time born three children. The
15 last one being born four months before the event. Went
16 into prison, apparently with her child, because there's
17 a letter from Gustave Haggaman who states that: "One of
18 the most fierce rioters was a young girl and he
19 described her as a girl with her child on her arm. And
20 he said how pitiful it was to see her in the prison.

21 Now, Queen Matthilde was a Catholic. And McBean,
22 from Estate Cane, which is where Plaza and K-Mart are
23 right here in Frederiksted. And I have traced her back
24 to Africa. I know her parents, her grandparents, her
25 great-grandparents, because of these wonderful records

1 kept by the Danes. Her mother, for example, was Cecilia
2 Simmonds McBean and her father was William McBean.

3 She had several brothers and sisters. These are
4 the things that will make these people come back to
5 life. Because we just think of them as these great
6 heroines, but we don't know the human elements. And so,
7 when a person says something like this was this
8 criminal, Queen Matthilde had had no run-ins with the
9 law at the time she was involved in Fireburn.

10 She was a good, God-fearing girl that took all of
11 her sacraments at St. Patrick's Church. When you look
12 at her death record, the record states omni in the
13 section dealing with sacraments. Omni, as you know,
14 from Latin, means all. She had taken all of her
15 sacraments, including exumption. But in any case, she
16 had sisters and brothers.

17 Catherine, Harriet, Robert. There were even a
18 set of twins: Mary and Ann Maria, who apparently, loved
19 her dearly, and I believe is buried next to her. And
20 she had a brother named Simeon.

21 She also had children. She had a William Moore
22 born in 1873. Anna Elizabeth Williams, baptized
23 December 19, 1875. Born on November 1875.

24 Mattilda Joanna Jacobs, born 1896, because she
25 had the three children before her involvement and then

1 she had two children after. Her last child is -- you'll
2 see him referred to as Harry Martin. And I'll bring out
3 some additional information on him shortly. He was a
4 police in Frederiksted and all of that.

5 But the point I'm making is this. This girl that
6 was supposed to have been nothing but a morader and a
7 criminal, really had no criminal record before this
8 event. And not only was she a nice girl apparently,
9 based on what you see in the records.

10 For example, by the time -- she was involved in
11 Fireburn at age 21, she already had a Godchild. How
12 many people by 21, especially in the Era when people
13 were given Godparents who were of names, who could give
14 them a Mahogany round table or to take care of them in
15 the event of death of the parents. Or paid for them to
16 go to school or something.

17 This was a young girl who had already been
18 honored by being made a godparent. And when she went to
19 prison 1882, her sister, Maria had a child in 1884 and
20 named her child Matthilda Petersen, after her sister.
21 I have the Birth Paper. And interestingly, this is the
22 Birth Paper of her niece named after her right here.

23 Now, I had the pleasure of doing an interview
24 about a year and a half ago with an Italian Firm that
25 came to interview me on my Fashion career, right here on

1 St. Croix. And we went to dinner after, and while
2 talking, I mentioned some of the other things that I do.
3 Historic research being one of them. And when I
4 mentioned that four women burned an island 130 years,
5 they couldn't believe it.

6 They wanted to know how in the world was this
7 knowledge not known all over. How was this information
8 not known all over the world? And right then and right
9 there, they said, Mr. James, we would like to do a
10 feature film on Fireburn. Not a documentary, a feature
11 film. And this Summer, the details of that arrangement
12 will be finalized.

13 And so, the point I'm making is we have a
14 historical legacy that they gave to us and they were
15 limited because of circumstances in their ability to
16 read and write and record.

17 What they did was complied with their heritage,
18 which was to pass information on, which is through the
19 oral tradition, which if you understand that concept,
20 and you realize that without that oral buttress to your
21 research, you would never find this information.

22 Because you can't put it together. But they gave
23 us what they could and we now -- it is now incumbent
24 upon us to record it, because we no longer live in
25 societies where our parents and grandparents sit with us

1 and talk to us and pass the history.

2 We all live these nuclear lives in these nuclear
3 families. Getting in cars and going off wherever we're
4 going to work and coming home, not integrating the way
5 we should. So efforts are being made to make sure that
6 this information is preserved for us and for the future
7 generations.

8 Now enough of the editorializing, because we have
9 other business to attend to. But what I'd like to do at
10 this point is we have a quorum, so we can proceed. I'd
11 like to open the round of questions to the senators on
12 the committee and any other senator that might come
13 would also be encouraged to join.

14 Point of Information; Mr. Myron Jackson who was
15 unable to attend to give testimony on behalf of himself
16 and on behalf of Commissioner Mathes sent a written
17 statement and has asked that it be read into the record
18 before we begin the round of questions.

19 Please proceed.

20 MRS. H. ROWE: The Virgin Islands Cultural
21 Heritage Institute, Department of Planning & Natural
22 Resources

23 Testimony to the Committee on Education, Youth &
24 Culture

25 Legislature of the Virgin Islands

1 *Frederiksted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands*

2 *May 6, 2009*

3 *Good morning*

4 *Senator James, Chairman and other members of the*
5 *Committee on Education, Youth & Culture.*

6 *My name is Myron D. Jackson, and I am the*
7 *Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Cultural*
8 *Heritage Institute of the Department of Planning &*
9 *Natural Resources.*

10 *On behalf of Commissioner Robert Mathes and Dr.*
11 *Lois Habtes, Chairwoman and other members of the Board*
12 *of Governors of the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage*
13 *Institute, I would like to thank the Committee on*
14 *Education, Youth & Culture for the opportunity to*
15 *testify on Bill Number 28-0010:*

16 *An Act amending Title 1, V.I. Code, Chapter 11,*
17 *Section 171 commemorating laborers on Contract Day or*
18 *Fireburn as a day to be revered and remembered in the*
19 *Virgin Islands.*

20 *The Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute*
21 *(VICH I) was established in 1992 by the Virgin Islands*
22 *Legislature with the passing of legislation Act Number*
23 *5778 on February 4, 1992.*

24 *According to the mandate, "The preservation and*
25 *promotion of a people's heritage can be an affirmation*

1 of their existence, which in turn has a strong positive
2 effect on their political, vocational and social
3 structures."

4 Each generation is obliged to pass on to its
5 children and youth, the cultural identity that is at the
6 root of its existence. The law warns that a society
7 that fails to preserve and promote its culture may lose
8 its identity, its structural fabric, and ultimately, its
9 reason for being.

10 Over the centuries, our ancestors paid the
11 ultimate price for many of the rights and privileges
12 that we enjoy today.

13 It is our responsibility to remember their
14 personal sacrifices, struggles, and their bloodshed on
15 our behalf in making these islands a better society and
16 a better world for us and others who have made these
17 islands home.

18 The enabling legislation for the VICH
19 states..."the Virgin Islands are replete with heroes and
20 heroines, particularly of African descent, whose
21 personal contributions and sacrifices and their
22 insistence on human rights and justice ignited the torch
23 of Virgin Islands liberty"...Mary Thomas, William
24 Arnald, Rebecca Frederik, Francis Leonard, Axeline
25 Saloman, Joseph Parris, Thomas Graydon are a few of the

1 ancestral names of leaders of the Fireburn we should
2 remember.

3 This proposed bill, sponsored by Senator Terrence
4 "Positive" Nelson acknowledges significant chapter in
5 our history that has been ignored for the most part, but
6 for a few that keep this history alive with an annual
7 observance and program on October 1st, in Frederiksted,
8 St. Croix.

9 I would caution members of the committee that
10 amending the law to recognize this historical event is a
11 good beginning. However, funding for the necessary
12 programs and activities within our schools and community
13 is vital and necessary if this legislation, when passed,
14 is to be meaningful.

15 The Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute is
16 presently underfunded and is limited in carrying out its
17 mandated activities. In the past, community groups and
18 organizations have lobbied the Legislature for funding
19 for programs that are commemorative events, holidays and
20 cultural programs.

21 This practice has affected the effectiveness of
22 the institute to carry out its mandated function. Thus,
23 we have not been able to develop, promote, and
24 disseminate appropriate educational materials that can
25 be effectively used, in collaboration with the Cultural

1 Education Division of the Department of Education, in
2 our institutions, schools and for our students,
3 educators researchers and all those interested.

4 A review of the existing legislation for holidays
5 and observances in the V.I. Code best demonstrates this
6 point that many of the listed holidays and observances
7 pass without mention or any appropriate recognition or
8 observance.

9 I am certain that citizens of the St. Croix
10 community and civic and cultural organizations will
11 continue to observe October 1st, in commemoration of the
12 "Fireburn" or "Firebun" Day. However, the ultimate
13 responsibility in enacting this legislation lies with
14 this body to assure that our entity is able to carry out
15 the legislative mandate.

16 We would also recommend that the bill be expanded
17 to include sites of memory, burial grounds, plantations
18 and landmarks associated with the "Fireburn".
19 Appropriate historic markers should be erected at
20 designated sites and locations, and a monument dedicated
21 to the memory of this historic event should be funded
22 and commissioned.

23 This can be done through collaboration with the
24 Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute, the Division
25 of Historic Preservation, Virgin Islands Council of the

1 Arts of the Department of Planning & Natural Resources,
2 the Historic Preservation Commission and the Virgin
3 Islands Humanities Council.

4 The Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage Institute is
5 in support of Bill Number 28-0010 and would recommend
6 that funding be part of the proposed legislation that
7 will enable the Virgin Islands Cultural Heritage
8 Institute to carry out its mandate.

9 Once again, thank you for the opportunity to
10 testify on this proposed legislation.

11 Sincerely,

12 Myron D. Jackson, Executive Director

13 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you. We'd now like to
14 begin the round of questioning, beginning with the order
15 in which the senators came onto the floor. Senator
16 Hill, you are recognized for eight minutes.

17 SENATOR HILL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good
18 morning, colleagues. Good morning to our distinguished
19 testifiers who have joined us and to the audience, and
20 to those viewing and listening.

21 Knowledge enlightens and awakens us to parts of
22 our souls and consciousness that sometimes we are not in
23 touch with.

24 And it was certainly an education for me to sit
25 and listen to the distinguished historian and senator.

1 And yesterday I was going to actually make a similar
2 statement in St. Thomas through parts of the Hearing.

3 And that was an effect that Senator Wayne James,
4 he's such a breath of fresh air in the Senate, and that
5 he enriches our service and our experience because we
6 have the opportunity to learn so much from him.

7 But I'm pleased that I actually didn't make the
8 statement yesterday because it is so much more
9 significant making it today.

10 I wanted to -- when the testifiers were making
11 their presentations, the one thing that I kept thinking
12 was we designate a day of reverence. We passed a law
13 and this is a couple sentences really, if you take out
14 the whereas clause, it's really just a couple sentences.

15 And then what? What really is the significance
16 of what we do? We have 17, 18 holidays in the
17 territory, not giving administrative holidays that we
18 take off for Carnival and those kinds of things. And
19 most of those holidays are time for people to just stay
20 home.

21 They don't have any great significance to the
22 community. They don't have any particular historic
23 significance or importance to the people who live here.
24 And so, we take them off and we go to the beach or we do
25 something.

1 So I was thinking, is that what we want to do
2 again? To just create another day where government
3 employees get the day off and they take off and go home
4 and go to the supermarket and do whatever. And if
5 that's what we want to create, then I certainly won't
6 support that.

7 So having listened to Senator James, he brings a
8 totally different perspective on what we really could
9 accomplish with a piece of legislation that could come
10 out of this body, based on testimony.

11 And Myron Jackson's statement sort of is in the
12 same vein that I was thinking. And so, his statement
13 sort of solidify in my mind the need to not just pass a
14 bill that says we want to have another holiday.

15 But to pass a bill that once it is enacted into
16 law, actually creates an environment, an opportunity, a
17 consciousness that can become a significant part of our
18 community; and a significant part of recognizing our
19 history and reminding us. And helping our young people
20 connect to the great events of the past, and helping
21 them build a foundation towards more in the future.

22 So that is, I think, our challenge today. It's
23 not to just pass a couple lines that's in the bill now.
24 Because if that is all we did, I would feel that we have
25 fallen way short of the significance, the importance,

1 the remarkable eloquent presentation that Senator James,
2 Mr. Tyson and Mr. Emanuel, Mr. Brown have stated on the
3 record.

4 If all we do is pass what is before us today, we
5 would -- I don't think in any way really accomplish what
6 you have set out as a vision and what Myron has set out
7 in his statement before us today.

8 So I believe that our challenge and Senator
9 James' challenge and all of us challenge is to develop
10 something that is worthy, to develop a law and a policy
11 that is worthy of the enormous emotion that has been
12 expressed here today. And I don't think that what we
13 have before us actually accomplishes that.

14 So I would say the dilemma here is to do what?
15 To just vote on the bill and pass it and let it go on to
16 Rules and see what happens? Or is it for us to really
17 put some real brave matter into it; to put some of the
18 thoughts and suggestions that Mr. Emanuel, Mr. Tyson and
19 Senator James have talked about.

20 So that's where I am. I am enlightened. I
21 learned a lot listening. And so, I think we have a
22 greater challenge before us than to just vote on what is
23 before us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 SENATOR W. JAMES: Thank you, Senator Hill. The
25 Chair would like to recognize the presence of Senator

1 Richards.

2 I think we read your statement into the record.
3 I think Senator Nelson was second in the Chamber.
4 Senator Nelson, would you like to -- you're recognized
5 for eight minutes. Thank you.

6 SENATOR NELSON: I'll pass.

7 SENATOR W. JAMES: The Stenographer needs to
8 change the tape. So this committee meeting stands in
9 Recess for three minutes.

10 (WHEREUPON, PART 1 OF MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT
11 11:45 p.m.)